

**Education Cabinet**

# **Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives to develop statewide disaster preparedness training through FEMA-funded national initiative**

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FRANKFORT, Ky. — State and local government agencies throughout Kentucky will be better prepared for emergencies thanks to \$2.6 million recently awarded to the Council of State Archivists (CoSA) by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives (KDLA) will use the funding from the national Intergovernmental Preparedness for Essential Records (IPER) initiative to train state and local government agencies throughout the Commonwealth to identify and protect essential records and recover those damaged by natural or human disaster.

According to Vicki Walch, executive director of CoSA, the need for such a program became apparent in 2005 during the organization's response to Hurricane Katrina.

"We knew from experience," said Walch, "that whether a disaster is a localized fire or a widespread terrorist attack, the governments that have good records management in place are best prepared to respond to and recover from an emergency."

David Carmicheal, the director of The Georgia Archives who will chair the project's Advisory Board, cited examples of records used by governments to respond to emergencies: "They immediately turn to documents containing communication plans and delegations of

authority. Infrastructure records tell them where the gas mains and electrical lines are and whether bridges and tunnels can withstand the stress of the disaster.

"All of these help the government respond at the moment of the emergency. And after the disaster," said Carmicheal, "governments need records to restore the community; deeds and other property records, court records, and historical records help put a community back together again and restore order."

"The benefit to Kentucky will be immense," said Interim Kentucky State Archivist and Records Administrator, Barbara Teague.

"Kentucky often has tornadoes, floods, and wildfires, and continues to prepare responses to earthquakes that might occur along the New Madrid fault line. We look forward to working with our colleagues within the region and around the country to ensure that the records of government so essential to our lives are protected."

The IPER initiative will develop a national curriculum and create Web-based seminars, which will be customized to meet specific needs of states and localities. The Kentucky team will be coordinated by KDLA and include representatives from the Kentucky Division of Emergency Management, the Commonwealth Office of Technology, and local governments. The regional offices of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and the FEMA will support the team's effort.

Outlining the impact the program will have, Rex Wamsley, director of FEMA's national Continuity of Operations Division, noted that the "development of common training for use in each of the states will enhance the potential for inter-governmental cooperation throughout the nation. FEMA's national and regional offices have been working actively with the National Archives and state archives for the last two years to protect essential records. We want to ensure that governments at all levels can recover and resume operations quickly following a natural disaster or other emergency."

Conley Edwards, state archivist of Virginia and president of the CoSA, commented, "We are thrilled by the support from FEMA for this project. It will ensure that state and local governments know

how to secure records that are essential to protecting life, property, and individual rights as well as those that are necessary to restoring order and resuming essential operations of government following a disaster."

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Photos to accompany this press release on the Intergovernmental Preparedness for Essential Records (IPER) Project are available at <http://www.statearchivists.org/prepare/iper/photos-10-2007release.htm>